

# The TRAGEDY of **INDEPENDENCE**



*By*  
Olakunle **SORIYAN**



**The TRAGEDY**  
**of**  
**INDEPENDENCE**

Olakunle  
**SORIYAN**

**OLAKUNLE SORIYAN COMPANY**

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# PREFACE

This TIME... as Africans, we must acknowledge that though we appear to be relatively at peace, we are actually engaged in a subtle but deadly war. We are in a war against a great many of the norms we have allowed to pass for too long. We are at war against the limitations posed by infrastructural deficiencies and retrogressive policies. We are at war with HIV, Malaria and Infant Mortality. We are at war with shortage of water and food. We are at war against prejudices and paradigms, comfort, convenience and the status quo. We are at war with selfishness and greed. We are at war with our thinking. We are at war with our history. We are at war with ourselves. Actually, we are angry!

**“ 50years ago, we could afford to allow time and history to pass judgment on the choices, decisions, and actions of our so-called nationalists. But today, 50years after, we are the time and we are the history. With the benefit of hindsight and in retrospect, we can now evaluate the options available to the people of 50years ago. This history and the evaluation will be vital in determining the credibility of people and ideals for our present and future peace. ”**

Unfortunately, the anger from these many wars is only verbally directed at leadership but physically directed at our relationships. Our wives, husbands, children, friends, employees and employers, colleagues and associates are those who daily soak the impact of our anger; not the custodians of the system that incubates the frustration. So...this time...let us take the anger to where it foundationally belong---not to persons or systems but, first of all, to history by apportioning responsibility, find roles, establish accountability; seek to identify how to go forward. 50years ago, we could afford to allow time and history to pass judgment on the choices, decisions, and actions of our so-called nationalists. But today, 50years after, we are the time and we are the history. With the benefit of hindsight and in retrospect, we can now evaluate the options available to the people of 50years ago. This history and the evaluation will be vital in determining the credibility of people and ideals for our present and future peace.

# The TRAGEDY of Independence . . .

*By Olakunle Soriyan*

## **The Evil of Colonialism and the Betrayal from our Freedom Fighters:**



Truth be told, what Africans wanted before independence, is what they still want now in 2013. After many years of independence, their conditions have not changed; as a matter of fact, they are now worse. But the lives of their so-called nationalist and freedom fighters are better; they are more famous, they have more money, bigger investments and top reputation capital earned at the expense of the people's social and economic peace. On one hand, before independence, Africans were really never as interested in the Independence of a nation as they were in the freedom their individuality deserves; and independence was suppose to be a critical pathway to that. More than territorial integrity, the people wanted equal opportunities, adequate infrastructure that supports the creative expression their individuality deserves.

After 50 years of independence, with the benefit of hindsight especially, it's now obvious that the so-called nationalists' and freedom fighters were not as interested in the social and economic peace of their people as they were in the independence of a nation. Their undeclared motive seem to be to takeover the white man's perks and lifestyle; and trust me, independence delivered that; and nothing more. It was simply a classical case of a clash of motives, expectations and priorities between that of the African people and those of the freedom fighters they trusted so ignorantly, naively and passionately. Today...it looks like the goal of independence was to earn the right to self-destruct and to change the colour of oppression from white to black by empowering fellow blacks..fellow Africans..to oppress their own people.



Colonialism was naked oppression and one would have expected the end of it would be a unique opportunity for the African leaders who took over to re-write the script, to re-define their identity enough to enable them take advantage of the silver lining of colonialism. Instead, the baton of oppression only changed hands, from white colonial masters to black educated freedom fighters whose true motives played out in their inability to deliver on the promise of freedom they had adopted as mantras. These freedom fighting, educated elitists remained in the shadows of the colonialists after independence---I mean, the schools remained the same, and even depreciated in value; infrastructures dilapidated and the abuse the white man brought on culture was hardly corrected.



Abubakar Tafawa Balewa

The educated elites who supposedly won freedom from the colonialists (and who ironically were trained by colonialist institutions) only sought the power of the colonialists, which they believed their education entitled them to, fundamentally. Colonialism changed to Oppression. The skin pigmentation of the oppressor also changed from white to black. And nationalism was a masqueraded jostle for power. And since its agenda was not really about transformation and renaissance, it couldn't meet the expectation of the masses.



Just like in every African nation, October 1, 1960 for example was a “tragedy”. The critical and only problem on October 1, 1960, was that Nigeria got INDEPENDENCE, not FREEDOM. The celebrations on that “sad” day were all about what I call SCRIPTED-FREEDOM but popularly called INDEPENDENCE. All those who celebrated on that day were naïve, simple-minded and completely ignorant of the issues in my opinion. Unknown to the celebrating weak majority, the clamour for self-rule achieved its goal, SELF-RULE; but from SELFISH-MOTIVES! Or how else can we define the emotional and nation-building character of the “SELF” part of the “SELF-RULE”? For want of a better phrase, I call it RULERSHIP from SELFISH-MOTIVES.



**INDEPENDENCE**, for Nigeria and many other African nations, was, for want of a better sentence, the sovereign right to self-destruct; and with independence achieved, African nations actually began a long and strange march towards growth and development that made development look so complex and mysterious---a strange march that has taken more than fifty years in the wilderness of mismanagement, corruption and poverty and has left a generation dead and unfulfilled---without having seen the Promised Land---a promised land of quality education, rapid infrastructural development, and mass employment for its citizens. This is the complex history that lies at the base of the civil wars, wide spread poverty and disease that has ravaged the continent. The freedom of the people was obviously not the goal of the struggle for independence; because today, we are yet to be TRULY FREE. So, what was the true motive of our “Heroes” and “Freedom Fighters” at independence? This question, I will attempt to answer later in this discuss. We can however go on to establish why, over 50years ago, “independence” was not what Africa needed.

# ●———— **First Thought** ————●

*(Two Reasons, We Never Needed Independence)*

# Two REASONS, We Never Needed Independence



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Africa  
simply  
accepted a  
foreign  
system  
without the  
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maximize  
the morals,  
ethics,  
standards,  
values,  
principles  
and  
resources of  
the system.”

## *The First Reason:*

Through colonialism, Africa was actually being introduced to a new, compelling and foreign idea of the business of government and citizenship. No doubt, Colonialism was an infringement on the fundamental human rights of the African people. It needed to end as fast as it could. It thrived on the ignorance, greed, fear and opaqueness of the people. **The ideal of colonialism drew strength from the wrong notion that Africans did not have enough horse sense and character to govern themselves; and demeaning as this was, the subsequent years of misrule have almost proven the white supremacist right.** They are almost right, not because of their assertion that we cannot truly govern ourselves but more because, before and after independence, we accepted what we did not understand and were yet to master; and we were selfishly impatient in learning the ropes to perfect foreign systems of administration, governance and even citizenship. In the defence of our ORIGINALITY and DIFFERENCE, our ONLY CREDIBLE OPTION (50years ago) to not accepting that which was foreign (Civil Service, Systems of Government, Democracy et al), was to TAKE THE PAIN and DEPLOY THE DISCIPLINE to INVENT OUR OWN. Sadly, our so-called nationalists' were probably too hypnotized by the lure of governance to take responsibility for this; particularly as they had a very strong alibi in independence.

I mean, while it was true that Africa, at that time, did not have the capacity to administer a completely foreign system of administration, governance and citizenship; the question to ask was, must we? We can ask this because, as free humans, we have the capacity to invent our own systems in sync with our peculiar realities as a people. Our options were quite inflexible---it is either we reject the foreign system of administration, governance and citizenship out rightly, fight for freedom and invent our own; or we humbly accept it, in the spirit of collaboration and exchange, accept our ignorance of the new order and its mental, emotional, economic and social demands, and humbly prepare for a very long track of apprenticeship---“British officials, estimated at the time, that a minimum period of between 10 to 15 years of intensive training was needed to prepare reasonably efficient and stable modern administrations”; which was discarded in the rush to transfer power. The error of not thinking this way, and opting rather for independence the way we did, was, as someone remarked, “like giving a child a latch-key, a bank account and a shot-gun”.

Africa simply accepted a foreign system without the empowerment to maximize the morals, ethics, standards, values, principles and resources of the system. Independence to Africa placed absolute power in the hands of mismatched and unsuited politicians (lacking the cognate experience of governance, parliamentary life and administrative competence) required to manage a new nation, and of course, a defiant and subversive military. The result was a total drain

and compromise of our human dignity. No wonder, Houphouet-Boigny, the so-called freedom fighter from the then Ivory Coast, for selfish reasons and totally unaware of the full import of the weight of his words, made a very correct but unpopular statement, “It is not the shell of independence which counts; it is the contents: the economic contents, the social contents and the human contents.” I cannot agree more.

First, all over Africa, local manpower to adequately and effectively handle the complexities of nation-building was basically not just available. Most African societies were predominantly illiterate and innumerate---the lack of skilled and ethical personnel was acute. Only 16% of the adult population was literate. I mean, just as the era of independence was beginning, the entire region of black Africa, containing a population of about 200million, produced only 8,000 secondary school graduates, about 50% of which were from Ghana and Nigeria. No more than 3% of the student-age population obtained an education at secondary level. Only a handful of the new states had more than 200 students in university training. More than three-quarters of high-level manpower in government and private business were foreigners. On average, less than 10% of the African population at independence earned a wage. Africa's share of world trade was no more than 3%; and it was said that the assets of three US corporations---GE, Du Pont and the Bank of America---exceeded the GDP of all Africa, including South Africa. The Gold Coast could only boast of some 60 lawyers by the late 1920s; Kenya's first African lawyer did not begin to practice law until 1956; only 35 Africans had gained higher education in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) by 1959; an African was only appointed a district officer in Tanganyika (now Tanzania) in 1957; by 1960, the sum total of university graduates in Congo was 30; by 1950, just ten years before independence, there was only one Northern university graduate---a Zaria Fulani convert to Christianity.

### **The Second Reason:**

We did not need independence was that, by the independence era, African leaders were not clear about how to effectively deal with the unprecedented complexities of our political and social development. The new African leaders had no wisdom or template to manage the unhealthy impact of our forced ethnic composition. The [ability](#), capacity, or [skill](#) to identify, assess, and manage the [emotions](#) of one's [self](#), of others, and of [groups](#) that was needed to fuse and bond into nations, a diversity of different peoples, speaking different languages and at different stages of development was just not there. For a fact, the new states had no ethnic, class or ideological fortitude to hold them together; and no defining historical or social contents upon which to build. The tribal factor was to remain a decisive tool in the various crises that followed independence all across the continent.

In 1948, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (who later became the first prime minister of Nigeria almost by right) remarked: “Since 1914, the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their backgrounds, in their religious beliefs and customs; and do not show themselves any signs of willingness to unite... Nigerian unity is only a British invention”; true assertion, no doubt; but how this gentleman later became the Prime Minister of that, in his words, “British Invention” is a question to ask. In his own words, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Yoruba leader, also wrote, “Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical



**Chief Obafemi Awolowo**

expression. There are no 'Nigerians' in the sense as there are 'English', 'Welsh', or 'French'. The word 'Nigerian' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria and those who do not.” Another true assertion, no doubt; but how this gentleman later spent all his life vying to be the president of this, in his own words, “mere geographical expression” is also a question to ask. If these words were true to these men, I would have expected them to live out the veracity of their idea of truth. As freedom fighters and nationalists that they were supposed to be, one would not be wrong

to have expected them to rather die than accept the notion of a united Nigeria, which, in their opinion, by their own assertion, should be “a lie seeking conversion to truth”. I guess their personal life was of far more value than the struggle they represent---a reality that is contrary to what the life of a true freedom fighter should be. These are the minds that took over the new nations after independence. And trust me, we could have had and can still have a united Nigeria but not with the pettiness of thinking that accepted independence; which is still prevailing 50years after.

Truly, there are no Nigerians in the sense as there are 'English' or 'French', but must there be? The first assumption that we must have Nigerians in that order is, in itself, not totally true. We could have had and can still have Nigerians within a definition not yet exploited. Obviously, 50years ago, there were no templates on building a new nation. There were books on how to build a mansion, how to fix a meal, repair engines, how to kiss a girl. But even today, I am still searching for a book on how to build a nation; particularly one with diverse ethnic groups, speaking hundreds of languages, with different religions. It meant our educated elites of 50years ago had the freedom to invent their nation-building contents in sync with our peculiar realities as a people. Dr. Henry Kissinger had also noted that “...the long-established nations of the West have fallen prey to the temptation of ignoring history and judging every new state by the criteria of their own civilizations. It is often over-looked that the institutions of the West did not spring full-blown from the brow of contemporaries but evolved over centuries which shaped frontiers and defined legitimacy, constitutional provisions, and basic values...the institutions of the West developed gradually while those of most new states were put into place in elaborated form immediately...”

The concern, however, was that the new educated freedom fighters of 50years ago also fell prey of judging their would-be new states by the criteria of Western civilization. They, for reasons I will outline later, ignored the sacrificial, mentally and emotionally demanding option of inventing their own ideals about citizenship, legitimacy, constitutional provisions and basic values. For example, while our nationalists were busy pretending that Nigeria was one in 1960 and so, never attended to the issue; just about the same time, the new nation Singapore, which was an artificial nation as much as Nigeria was, decided to take advantage of the racial challenges. The visionary leader, Lee Kwan Yew had said, “...the traumatic experience of race riots...made my colleagues and me even more determined to build a multiracial society that would give equality to all citizens, regardless of race, language, or religion. It was an article of faith which guided our policies.” This was an option for



**Lee Kwan Yew**

our educated elites 50years ago. Instead, they allowed the experience of tribal challenges to further widen the gap. It meant we could have built a multi-tribal society that would give equality to all citizens, regardless of tribe, language, or religion. Hear Lee Kwan Yew again, “We had to create a new kind of economy, try new methods and schemes never tried anywhere else in the world, because there was no other country like Singapore...I concluded that an Island city-state in Southeast Asia could not be ordinary if it was to survive. We had to make extraordinary efforts to become a tightly knit, rugged, and adaptable people who could do things better and cheaper than our neighbours...we had to be different.”

But for our new African leaders however, it was difficult to invent that originality and difference. Instead, they looked for their similarities with the nations of the West; not knowing that in life, no one is recognized or rewarded for their similarities, we are recognized and rewarded for our difference. It was simply very difficult for the nationalists to see beyond the challenge posed by the pettiness of tribalism. No wonder, tribalism became a tool of performance, though it never performed. This singular reality actually turned into very serious ethnic combats---a combat that is, in itself, a tool for politicians on all sides to whip up ethnic fear, suspicion and jealousy for their own advantage and to entrench themselves in power---a combat that ensured Tribalism became the ideology of politics.

What is now clear is the truth that the requirement for dealing with the high-level ethnic complexity of 50 years ago had to be invented; but the leaders of each region, in Nigeria for example, could not pay the price; instead they lost the initiative to tribal pettiness. Sir Tafawa Balewa later said in 1959, "I am confident, that when we have our own citizenship, our own national flag, our own national anthem, we shall find the flame of national unity will burn bright and strong." Compare this to his words earlier quoted, it is obvious that there was a compromise of position at some point. Well, over 50 years after, we are yet to find that "...flame of national unity...". He obviously did not understand the issue, or he underestimated the issue; or better put, may be he altogether represented an ulterior interest. Whatever his goal for making that erroneous statement, what was clear is that the wisdom for our peaceful co-existence (since we accepted to co-exist) was not available by October 1, 1960.

For these two reasons therefore, I am of the very strong opinion that, 50 years ago, Africa only needed freedom and power; she never needed independence! It's obvious the continent needed not colonialism either; neither did Africa need dependence (which is the present status of African nations). The so-called independence won by the nationalists was almost immediately but indirectly ceded back to the 'colonialists'; as the latter have, over the years, come to the rescue of their former colonies through aid and donations. The World Bank and IMF have become the new vehicles through which the puppet has been re-attached to the master's strings---the 'colonialists' now use institutions like the World Bank, IMF, and WTO to promote their economic agendas in their former colonies. Corporate multi-nationals, who came under the umbrella of foreign investments, have only ended up enriching themselves and their home nations. Some of these multi-nationals generate annual incomes that dwarf the GDP of their host countries. Today, about 32 western corporations own and control the vast resources of the Congo. Nigeria's vast oil reserves are largely controlled by foreign multinationals. The WTO has been accused of promoting unfair trade. Free trade policies have been foisted on many African nations as a pre-condition for receiving Aid. According to the Trade Justice Movement (TJM), world trade rules rob poor countries (majority African) of £1.3b a day, 14 times what they receive in aid. Meaning for every £1 received in Aid, Africa gives back £14. Africa is in no way an independent player in the global economy. It is a dependent one. It actually got its independence but never really won its freedom. Today, the continent remains the world's largest single liability with her begging bowl as her critical asset and an amazing reputation for producing what it does not consume and consuming what it does not produce. It has received the highest amount of aid, and is still the world's poorest continent; instructing us that a begging bowl is not a pathway to prosperity of any kind. Usually, what we forget is that for every degree of favour we seek, we lose a level of freedom; and we've been trading that freedom for over 50 years. However, If we did not need independence nor dependence, then what did we need? I'll rather close with that answer. For now, let us seek to give an answer to the question we asked earlier, "What was the true motive of our 'heroes' and 'freedom fighters at independence?'".



# ●—— **Second Thought** ——●

*(The Wrong Motive For Seeking Independence)*

# The ~~WRONG~~ MOTIVE For Seeking Independence

While a man's motive may remain unknown for a while, he only needs to begin to act and take decisions; in time, with the documentations of history, the wise and the discerning can begin to correctly reveal his motives as they simply observe, judge and interpret his actions. The educated elites of 2011 now have reasons to suspect sabotage as far as the motives of the educated elites of 50 years ago was concerned; irrespective of the noticeable sparks of genius some showed. In Nigeria for example, the intense struggle (that followed independence) between the country's three main political parties for supremacy over the federal government revealed the motive of the heroes, otherwise called Nationalists or freedom fighters. Why struggle for supremacy over the federal government? Very simple. The Control of the federal government determined the allocation of development resources. In the first place, why should each region produce its own political party dominated by the major ethnic group based there? For one, it communicates the pettiness and myopic nature of the nationalistic vision of our "freedom fighters". Most importantly however, each region produced its own political party because, technically, on October 1, 1960, independence was given to Nigeria; but practically, independence was actually not given to Nigeria but to three regions pretending to be one. The political views of the new Nigerian leaders in the six years of civilian rule until 1966 was reckless; and tended to be petty, as violent political debate was routinely conducted in hostile and offensive language; and ethnic loyalties were constantly exploited.



**At the risk of sounding judgemental and rude, this level of pettiness must be understood. Fundamentally, it was not that most of the nationalists' were anything near genius; the darkness in the large continent brightened the little light the new African leaders carried. The credibility of their intelligence was as a result of the deposit of ignorance existing in their locale; which crowned most of them as one-eyed kings in the land of the blind. I mean, in British West Africa, anyone who was educated and politically conscious was a nationalist of some kind. In French West Africa, the small educated elites that colonial rule produced were primarily driven by the attractions of independence and the lure of secession---their ambitions lay more in developing a high bourgeoisie, than in transforming society.**

All over Africa, the timetable for independence was determined not so much by any British reluctance to set them free but by local complications on the ground. Nigeria for example, was overwhelmed by extreme rivalries between its three regions, each of which was dominated by a major ethnic group with its own political party; and when one considers the thinking and mind-set of the nationalists, there was no way a national party could have emerged. The independence constitution had left the north with powerful advantages. With three-quarters of the land area and more than half the population, it dominated the Federation from the outset and appeared to intend to do so indefinitely. In the 1959 Federal Election, the Northern people's congress (NPC), controlled by Hausa-Fulani, captured 134 of 321 seats, all of them in the North, making it the largest single party. The Igbo, together with its coalition partners, gained eighty-nine seats; and the West's Action Group, controlled by Yoruba, gained seventy-three seats, spread across the three regions. Initially, the NPC was content to run the Federal Government jointly with the East's National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in a



coalition that avoided the danger of either the North or the two regions of the South holding power exclusively. The West's Action Group, for its part, settled for the role of parliamentary opposition in the Federal Parliament in the traditional British manner. At a regional level, each party controlled its own regional government: the NPC ran the North; the NCNC ran the East; and the Action Group ran the west. All were locked in ferocious competition for a larger share from the national treasury. Minority groups were embroiled in the struggle, taking sides against the major parties in their home region, in the hope of advancing the cause of setting up their own states. The inspiration needed to unify the most complex form of difference and diversity was not just available. On these grounds, it is obvious that victory will only go to the party whose region has the largest population.

So, why all the efforts (budgets for campaigns and elections) to gain the center when the pathway to the center was evident from day one? While the Northern Region (NPC) had the population to win (at least on paper), what's the victory plan of the Western Region (AG) and the Eastern Region (NCNC)? Rigging in a do or die affair to gain the center since the control of the federal government determined the allocation of development resources? I honestly do not think we needed a genius to know this, and I surely do not think this would have escaped the mind of the deep thinking Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe. Why then were they not able to know that a regional or ethnic driven party will only work for the North and cannot deliver the center for the South and the East? They most likely had a different motive; they probably were more concerned about been seen, involved, a voice of some sort, a hero to their regions, national figures and icons, in control of something, even if its just their regions or existing as the opposition; but not necessarily about nation-building from the center. Was the AG or NCNC just showing mere defiance to seek to win the votes of the people of the Northern Region, despite the obvious? Well, to seek to inspire the people of the Northern Region to vote in favour of the AG or NCNC and defeat the NPC could only have been achieved by a superior spirit of collaboration well above the pettiness of tribalism. Nobody cares what you know until they are clear about how you care. Awolowo and Azikwe did not do any inspirational deed in the North.

The Northerners respected the intelligence of Awolowo and Azikwe; but did not find them inspiring enough to submit their votes to them. As a person, as Obafemi Awolowo, though he did not do anything transformational for the people of the Western region, he did do very powerful things only as Premier of the region. So he must win election there since he is a son of the land and a major contributor to the development of the region. But it will take more than that for a “non-son-of-the-land” or a non-indigene to win the trust and confidence of the Northerners or Easterners or Westerners. It will take more than

### Moshood Abiola



Not to praise him in anyway except to report the facts as they were; really, It was MKO Abiola that understood this level of collaboration not the NPC, AG or NCNC. For years, well before he declared his intention for office, MKO Abiola had invested money, time, energy, inspiration and true heart of friendship in the people of the three regions. He was trusted by the people of the North, East and West, though the leaders of those regions remained on the fence of their separate interests---which was why, at the end of the day, though he won the votes of the people in the three regions; he never could win the trust of the custodians of the system. Even if we choose to respect the personal ambitions of the nationalists to be Prime Ministers and Presidents, they should have known that ethnic sentiments and tribal bias cannot sincerely and credibly deliver that ambition, at least in Nigeria; except by illegitimate means. Furthermore, in each region, minority groups resented the dominance of the three major ethnic groups and the neglect and discrimination they suffered as minorities and harboured ambitions to obtain their own separate states within Nigeria and the resources that would go with them. Non-Muslim minorities against their feudal Muslim overlords; Tiv resistance in 1960; the Edo-speaking

people of Benin wanted more autonomy for their historical Benin Kingdom; Ibibios and Efiks in the East were a handful.

As we read earlier, what became an insurmountable challenge for our freedom fighters and future leaders till this day was what the small and young nation of Singapore thrived on for over 30 years since 1965 (for them, racial differences, language barriers and religious sentiments; for Nigeria, tribal differences, language barriers and religious sentiments). Do not be deceived, our leaders had credible options 50 years ago; and to think they did only what they knew and understood will be naive and unfair to both the noble relevance of learning and history. The problem 50 years ago was not the complexities in the system but the complexities in the thinking and personal character of the leaders. Our nationalists simply never really thought sensible and intentionally about our originality and difference--we probably never had the personalities in the power corridors that could have done so. And please do not for a moment think personalities does not matter. Trust me, personalities shape events; and circumstances do not. Circumstances does not shape personalities either; rather circumstances give individuals the platform to go inside of them to supply their true contents to a world always desperately in need of it. Personalities actually shape circumstances and events. Outcomes are primarily determined by choices of mortals in response to what life can bring. Dr. Henry Kissinger put it this way, "...history shows that normally prudent, ordinary calculations can be overturned by extraordinary personalities. In the case of Lee Kwan Yew, the father of Singapore's emergence as a national state, the ancient argument whether circumstance or personality shapes events is settled in favour of the latter. Circumstances could not have been less favourable..." Lee Kwan Yew was the personality above circumstance, and it was not a fluke. Hear him, "Our greatest asset was the trust and confidence of the people...we were careful not to squander this newly gained trust by misgovernment and corruption. I needed this political strength to maximize what use we could make of few assets, a natural world-class harbour sited in a strategic location astride one of the busiest sea-lanes of the world. The other valuable asset we had was our people---hardworking, thrifty, eager to learn. Although divided into several races, I believed a fair and even-handed policy would get them to live peacefully together, especially if such hardships as unemployment were shared equally and not carried mainly by the minority groups. It was crucial to keep united Singapore's multilingual, multicultural, multi-religious society, and make it rugged and dynamic enough to compete in world markets. Driven by our visceral urges, we had done so...Do not worry about Singapore. My colleagues and I are sane, rational people even in our moments of anguish. We weigh all possible consequences before we make any move on the political chessboard..."

While the trust and confidence of the people of Singapore were the greatest asset of their nationalists in building a new nation, our own nationalists exploited this asset. While the Singaporean nationalists were careful not to squander this newly gained trust by misgovernment and corruption, our African nationalists squandered it; and military takeovers for example, was one of the consequences of the mistrust that followed. While the nationalists moved to keep united Singapore's multilingual, multicultural, multi-religious society, and make it rugged and dynamic enough to compete in world markets; African nationalists were busy using our multilingual, multicultural and multi-religious society as the ideology and unspoken tool of politics. While the Singaporean nationalist protected and promoted the creativity and freedom the individuality of their people deserved irrespective of race, language, religion or background; our nationalists were not ready to make equal, such lofty ideals like equality and peace, pain or struggle, irrespective of tribe, language, religion or background. Each nationalist was too petty not to look beyond the prosperity of their personal pockets and the prosperity of the region or tribe they represented. In my opinion, while it was personality that saved Singapore, it was a lack of it that nailed Africa.

Believe it or not, the undeclared critical goal of the Nationalist and Freedom Fighters was to remove the white man and live exactly as he lived. Enjoy his perks of office. Eat like he ate. Dress like he dressed. Talk like he talked. Buy like he bought. Drive or be driven like he drove or was driven. Travel like he travelled. Be received by the home office of the colonial masters like he was received. Be guarded like he was guarded. I can actually continue. Why this "competition"? Well, the fathers and grandfathers of the Nationalists had returned from the First and Second World Wars brandishing

stories of how they unbelievably fought along-side white men, killed white men, saw fearful white men who did not want to die as much as the black men were fearful and did not want to die, drank and dined with same---a powerful awakening that white men were mere humans after all. The freedom fighters had attended the same school with the white man and beat him in class, slept with their women including the wife's of some of their masters. All of these were contrary to the superiority and invincibility they had attached to the contents of the white man until then. Returning home, it was unacceptable to think that white men will continue to dictate events and happenings as well as control the system. It was a personal thing. It was a simple defence of personal pride and self-interest. From that moment, a program of hypnotism began. A strange hypnotism of resentment and rebellion very different from the kind of primitive and illiterate struggle that met the white man on arrival in Africa.

So, a new struggle had to begin, initiated by newly educated freedom fighters mixed with the now very cold fire resistance of our kings from empires and kingdoms like the Ashanti Empire, Songhai Empire, the Benin Kingdom, the Oyo Empire; the Fulani Empire; the real but later subdued inner strength of the Zulu king, Dosumu, Kosoko, Jaja of Opobo, Queen Amina, Ustman Dan Fodio and the likes. The undeclared or unconscious new goal was to unseat the white man and take over his lifestyle. Legitimate as it sounds, the foundation was not an outright rejection of any foreign aggression to oppress their people and exploit their resources; the motive was not the defence of the freedom and creativity the individuality and collective aspirations of their people deserve...No! The motive was a personal thing, a simple defence of personal pride and self-interest; and 50years is long enough for us to begin to question the content of history, and audit motives...its called hindsight.



We can confidently make this assertions because 50years ago our freedom fighters had enough hold on the people to inspire them to do the needful and the noble. The challenge was that the freedom fighters themselves sustained personal and well-scripted agendas that gave them some kind of "immunity" from doing the needful and the noble things themselves, how much more to inspire their people in that direction. One Nigeria would have been easily achieved had the freedom fighters themselves truly believed in it. All that was needed was to take advantage of the deposit of ignorance and illiteracy existing at that time (that compels the people to almost blindly follow the little spark of light and genius they could find through the education acquired by the few elites). Their words were law and whatever was defined as the critical way forward was what was promoted and defended by the people. Instead, they took another direction altogether---a direction in the creation of their fame and fat bank accounts earned at the expense of the peace and prosperity of their people.

With hindsight, 50years is now enough to weigh the records. It is too consistent in every African nation to think it was a fluke. The truth is: Independence 50years ago was a fad; it was just the next flashy thing to do, and the next big career to pursue---It was to the 50s and 60s what working in a bank or working in an Oil and Gas firm is to today's graduates---it was just the "In-Thing"; and nationalist after nationalist acted out the same script and blossomed in the shadows of the era. Even the great Lee Kwan Yew, in his outright candour, agreed to the "fashion of nationalism" when he wrote, "I returned to Singapore in 1950, confident of my cause, but ignorant of the pitfalls and dangers that lay ahead. An anticolonial wave swept me and many others of my generation." Our African nationalists were a part of the generation swept away by the anticolonial wave Lee Kwan Yew wrote of. The great statesman later wrote with deep candour, "On that 9th day of August 1965, I had started out with great trepidation on a journey along an unmarked road to an unknown destination." I guess the clear knowledge of this statement must have given the Singaporean new leaders the humility to seek solutions they knew they did not have. Assumption is the lowest level of knowledge and its twin is guessing. Having read through



lots of materials from our nationalists, and having studied the beliefs that they held so dear, it is obvious that a lot of assumption and arrogance fuelled their conviction they knew the road and that they were clear about how to build the new nation. Trust me, it was sheer arrogance and cockiness with knowledge. The political irresponsibility and waste that trailed independence gave the freedom fighters away.

Beginning from 1950, Martin Meredith, in his book, 'The fate of Africa', gives a near precise account of over fifty years of post-independence corruption in the continent.

Meredith highlights the clamour for self-rule and the vehement struggle by nationalist leaders to detach from the apron strings of the colonialist. Our Nationalists have led us to their promise land...not our own land of quality education, rapid infrastructural development, and mass employment for our people---promises touted by charismatic leaders like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Senegal's Léopold Senghor, Nigeria's Nnamdi Azikiwe and Tafawa Balewa, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya amongst others; and the list is almost endless. Felix Houphouet-Boigny, the nation's first president in the then Ivory Coast, was the so-called hero that took over the reins of power from the French in 1960. This Hero's lust for power became apparent as he was elected to serve a five year term, seven times (six times he ran unopposed), also serving as his own foreign minister (1961), minister of defence, agriculture and interior (1963). The Civil War that rocked the Ivory Coast from 2001 and claimed many lives is an offshoot of the leadership foundation laid by Felix Houphouet-Boigny.

President Robert Mugabe is a typical emblem of what I call "Nationalistic Deception." A hero turned villain, whose history reads like a classic with a twisted end. Mugabe rose to prominence in the 60s as a Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) leader in guerrilla warfare against white-minority rule in Rhodesia (in the Bush War: 1964–1979). From this conflict, Mugabe earned Africa, and indeed the world's respect, as a hero. This hero, ironically, has become Zimbabwe's greatest source of misery today --- 94% unemployment rate, 3500 recently killed by Cholera, a daunting economic and humanitarian crisis --- and this hero happens to be an emblem of the sort of hypocritical leadership that produced the leadership that has led Africa down sordid path.

Kwame Nkrumah for one is an interesting case in point. He took over the reigns of government from the British in Ghana in 1957. His status as an ex-political prisoner seemed to lend some credibility to his status. Nkrumah was world acclaimed, and the world as well as his countrymen expected a lot from him. Donning a kente cloth, he cut the picture of a true nationalist with a large heart for the people. He started off on a good note spending millions of dollars in a five-year spree, constructing lavish public buildings, creating nationalized industries from scratch and establishing a Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute. Nkrumah's legacy however took a different turn as his popularity declined. He sought baser means to sustain his waning status. Public contracts became a means for securing support, as 10 percent of such contracts were handed out to his allies. Nkrumah's reign did not bring Ghanaians the prosperity they envisaged it would. His character came under trial as the nation began to suffer



economically. He stamped out labor unions and had his political opponents incarcerated. The Ghanaians of 2011 may still pretend they had a real hero in Nkrumah but the Ghanaians of 1966 new better. Disappointed and exasperated, they eventually ousted Nkrumah from power in February 1966, while on a state visit to China. The Ghanaian's of 1966 demonstrated their excitement at this by celebrating on the streets, considering the military take-over a breath of fresh air.

The story was the same in neighbouring Nigeria. The hopes and aspirations that came with home-grown leadership were truncated as the newly elected civilian leaders enthroned their own personal agendas above the welfare of the people. The gun gained power in January 15th 1966 as a group of army officers attempted a failed but bloody coup which eventually led to the military taking over the reins of government under Major General Aguyi Ironsi. The nation groaned and writhed under many years of mismanagement and corruption as one gun totting soldier after another ascended the 'throne' and dictated after his whims and fancies.

The Congolese war and its many casualties blossomed in the shadows of Patrick Lumumba; the Sierra Leonean civil war which displaced thousands and killed thousands more, blossomed in the shadows of Sir Milton and Alfred Margai; Tanzania, which today remains one of the poorest nations in the world, blossomed in the shadows of Julius Nyerere, who laid the socialist foundations that stagnated the economy. All over Africa, country after country acted out the same script, almost like a domino effect. Most of the nation's nationalist turned out to be wolves in sheep skins and were soon toppled by greedy, power hungry dictators. Each African nation, poverty stricken and underdeveloped, sprouted in the shadows of its nationalists. In tracing the history of political misrule, corruption and economic disintegration in Africa, military incursion is always summoned as an alibi. But military rule, wrong as it was, was only a consequence; a consequence of nationalists' excesses. So, one by one, the military, a reflection of the general dissatisfaction of the people, toppled one nationalist regime after the other all over the continent. But unfortunately, just like the freedom fighters turned politicians wanted the perk of office and lifestyle of the colonial masters; the military also wanted the perk of office and lifestyle of the politicians. So the military simply followed the spirit of the nationalists, and clung on to power to perpetuate themselves.



Martin Meredith

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***All over Africa, country after country acted out the same script, almost like a domino effect.***

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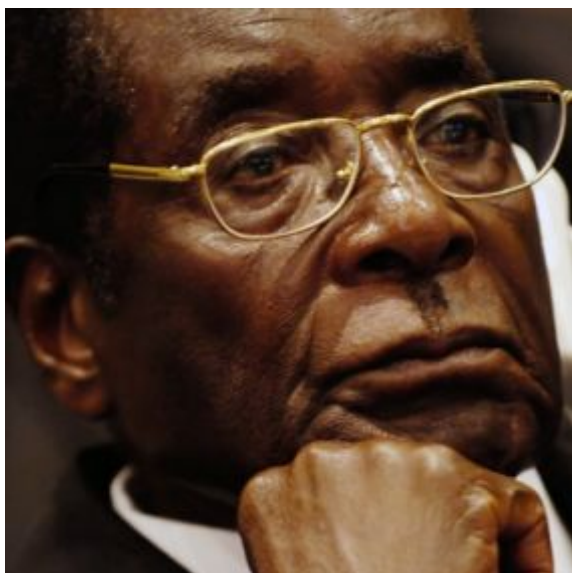
Ideally, a nation blossoms in the light of its heroes and nationalists; and galvanizes itself toward a glorious future, drawing inspiration from the memories of the sacrifices and commitments of its founders. Such memories are enshrined in documented history, handed down to generations down the line and quietly speak their expectations to those who receive the baton. Imagine America without the legacy of the founding fathers; the great documents they thought up and bequeathed to their country and of course, the freedom they bought at great risk and blood. What legacies did Mohandas Ghandi leave the leaders who took over the reins of power in India and what level of inspiration will India draw remembering this great man? One is therefore tempted to ask: What legacies did African Nationalists and the so-called founding statesmen leave for those that came behind them...us?! The answer to this remains a symposium discussion in the future.

***Most of the nation's nationalist turned out to be wolves in sheep skins and were soon toppled by greedy, power hungry dictators.***

# ● ——— Third Thought ——— ●

*(If We Needed Not Independence nor Dependence, What Did We **Need?**)*

# If We Needed Not Independence nor Dependence, What Did We **NEED?**



We needed interdependence. We needed freedom. We needed power. We needed control. We needed collaboration. The options were endless. What Africa needed 50 years ago was to remove the control the Colonial Masters had over our social and economic rights. It was our destiny to be the determinant factors of how we grow, live, love, work and war as a people; it must not be the prerogative of an oppressive visitor. Our commitment to our originality and difference, will demand that our primary responsibility remain the recognition, preservation and defense of every positive and progress-stimulating article embedded in our culture; while our secondary responsibility must be the recognition and embracing of every

positive and progress-stimulating article in other cultures across the globe and automatically exchanging that by deleting every negative article embedded in our culture.

We cannot take a critical look at “how we should change” without a foundational decision about “who we are” and “what is it about us that, once altered, changes who we are.” The “Defence of Our Originality” requires we always take ourselves back to the point where something started and where something must start---the Americans know this, the Asians too---this is the bridge to finding our determinant-player-status on the global scene which all first world nations have found including the Asian new entrants, and which will eventually crown us as the global player that we should be. We can change anything, BUT we MUST be willing, ready and able to inventory the credibility of the object of the needed change before we accept it, not to talk of imparting it. Meaning if we were going to coexist with the West, it is only collaborative and mutually beneficial that we exchange the best of our contents with the West and theirs with ours. It must not be one-sided. It is called the Law of Comparative Cost Advantage; and many years ago, it was called Trade by Barter. You can call it synergy. Collaboration. Leverage.



This is what worked in South Africa. If the Mandela land had received independence in the 50s or 60s, they would have suffered the same fate of other





African nations; blinded by the wave of anti-colonialism. They would not be the South Africa they are today..that I know for sure! They were and are still blessed. The economic peace and stability in present day South Africa is a classical example of this interdependence and blessing. While there was and there is still no praise in Apartheid, there was great blessing in it; and the corporate system, economic strength, social and structural amenities they now enjoy is what they inherited as the silver lining of Apartheid. Lee Kwan Yew put it this way, in the case of Singapore, "Indeed one question uppermost in my mind was how long the British would or could keep their bases in Singapore. Would their stay be shortened because of the way separation had taken place?" Lee Kwan Yew never wanted the British to leave as he had interest and agendas he knew a British stay will defend and promote. He knew he cannot afford to throw the baby away with the bath water.

For the new African leaders of 50years ago, they threw the baby out with the bath water. We simply did not have the mastery required to go it all alone. We may have been good with talk and analysis at the time but surely, the British would have been obviously better than us in some key departments of governance; essentially because it was their system we had decided to run and they have been at it longer than us. Like Lee Kwan Yew, the new African leaders of 50years ago should not have wanted the British to leave; and they should have identified the key interests and agendas they knew a British continuous management and stay will help sustain, defend, promote and reinvent again and again. It was even a known fact to all that British officials, estimated at the time, that a minimum period of between 10 to 15 years of intensive training was needed to prepare reasonably efficient and stable modern administrations to take over from them.

If it was that obvious, maybe the nationalists should not have allowed the British to leave the business of governance. Maybe African nationalist leaders should have created a tutelage structure that will give them total power and control of the nation (of course--- power over everything), but outsource the top echelon of the Civil Service (as well as Government Parastatals and

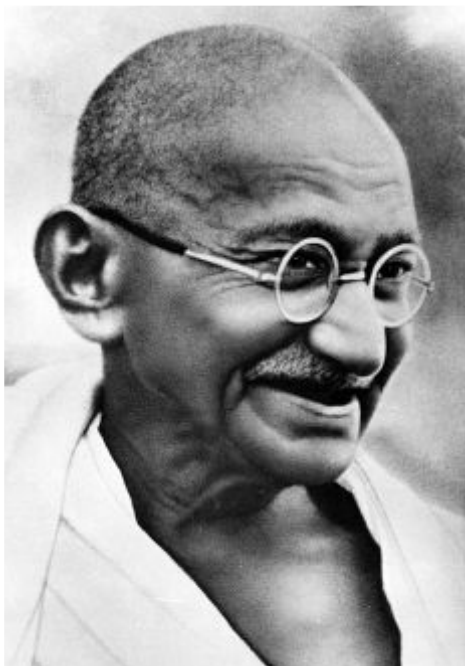




Agencies) to white expatriates; and outsource even key departments of the judiciary and legislature for a given period. It would not have been anything embarrassing. It would have been the simple display of the humility of a people in accepting and submitting to the training necessary for the management of a foreign business of government and citizenship. It would have been a simple policy of “Brain Gain”.

Maybe the new African leaders of 50 years ago should have initiated a big campaign, publicly encouraging British citizens to Naturalize by taking up Nigerian or Ghanaian or some other African country's

citizenship as long as those that will receive the citizenship will be highly-skilled British Citizens. It's Brain Gain; instead of the “Brain Drain” we later experienced. Till today, America still welcomes about 50,000 immigrants to their country annually to receive Green Cards; Canada too; and some other countries. it's brain gain! Maybe they should have then created a robust human capacity development program and bench-marking policy that allows bright Africans to bench-mark the white expatriates within a ten to twenty year period. May be under the same program, the new African leaders should have selected a number of young minds every two years who will attend the best of foreign Ivy-league universities at graduate and post-graduate level covering administration, public policy, science and technology, education and all.

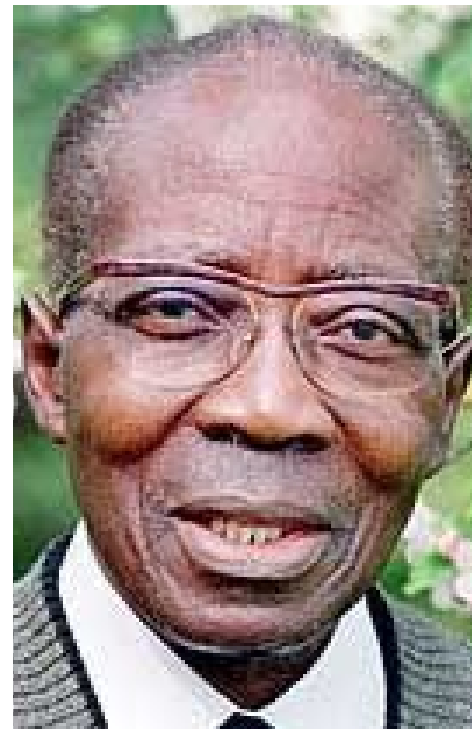


Maybe a “National ROI-Contract” should have been signed with these young Africans in such a format that they will return to their nation after their studies to serve in the government at various levels for a period not less than ten years. The goal is to inspire intellectual capital by getting these young minds to deploy the best of their newly gained contents for ten years will establishing a training system to reproduce more of their “kind” in the system.

If all of these had gone on for over 50years, Nigeria for one would have been a first world nation by now, socially and economically and a military super power with, on a lighter note, a minority population of Nigerians who will be all whites, not just “Niger Deltans” and the likes---may be the Governor of Ogun State or Adamawa State or Edo State would be a white man today as well as the Vice-President. It would have been a beautiful country and probably the best nation to live in 2011. Please note: Whites ARE NOT superior to blacks in anyway.

So, this is not in anyway pushing a white supremacy agenda..No! Africans were not inferior to whites 50years ago; we are not inferior 50years after. 50years ago and even till now, Africans understood things the West did not understood, as much as the West understood things Africans did not understood. However, 50years ago, part of what the Whites knew and understood more than the new African leaders was a system of government they created and had engaged for many years (i.e. the business of government, citizenship and nation-building generally). So, all of these is just a simple picture of how we could have used creative-collaboration to cover our human capital vulnerabilities 50years ago.

Maybe these were options 50years ago; maybe not. Whichever way, the simple point is this: Since we did not take the challenge to accept and celebrate the PAIN to DEPLOY the DISCIPLINE to INVENT OUR OWN business of citizenship and governance; we should have had the humility to submit to the learning and mastery of that which is essentially not ours. 50years ago, we did not need independence, dependence or colonial rule; we instead needed the freedom and power to be ourselves, to create a new world the entire globe can lean on as a succour point, where every atom of desire, ideas, dream, talent and gifting can find true and full expression irrespective of tribe, race, language, religion or background. Creative interdependence without hatred, bias and sentiments would have delivered that. 50years ago, we should not have chased the British OUT OF GOVERNANCE, we should ONLY have driven them OUT OF POWER; and conscientiously work alongside them by giving them the room to continue the business of Nation-Building, creating mega city systems and infrastructures with total control from our people.



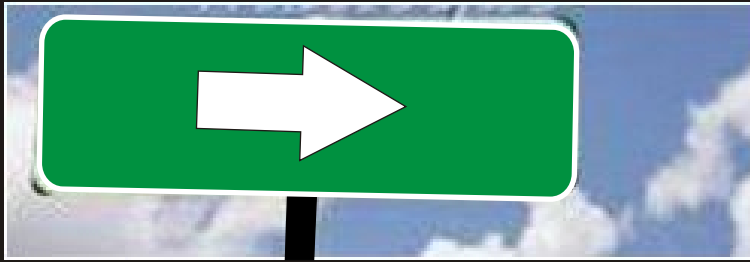


# THE WAY FORWARD

Final Thought

African National  
Independence

Featuring the Dates of  
Independence of Each Nation



**W**hile we cannot extricate western imperialist powers as well as the nationalist leaders of 50 years ago from the injustices of the past, the time has come for the minds of 2011 and beyond to move on and take responsibility for our present and for

the future. First, we must cease to believe people by the assessment of the obvious, and begin to take a second look at what everyone is saying or doing. Then, we must find the changes we can still make in the contents of history; accept what we can no longer change in the same content; and begin to chart new trajectories of development with love, focus, humility, superior thinking and hard work. Originality and Difference will be key in discerning and interpreting future actions that can bring renaissance and transformation. The truth is: we must determine the core values that will be part of our personal and corporate life as a people. This posture will, according to James. C. Collins and Jerry. I. Porras in their book, "Build To Last", help us distinguish our everlasting and ageless core values and continuing purpose (which **WILL NEVER CHANGE**) from our operating practices, business and modernization strategies (which **WILL BE CHANGING CONSTANTLY** in response to a changing world). We should accept that the deliberate commitment to copy styles will damage our ability to sustain necessary principles. Those who copy never really learn the genius of their models; they only copy their eccentricity and weaknesses. Our people must be bold and be proud to think, behave, relate, initiate or even dress unusually---the original way---with clear impact on policy formulation and legislation. It is very legal to differ. Diverge. Contrast. Disagree. Vary. Show a discrepancy if necessary. Obviously, every culture has its own excesses arising from abuse. While the excesses must be ruthlessly purged for our own balance, we equally must value and fight for the sanity in our system, for therein lies the key to our collective survival. We cannot be secondhand Frenchmen (as was the objective of the French policy of assimilation) or secondhand Americans (as witnessed by the identity crisis of Americo-Liberians in Liberia) and expect to be treated seriously on our own terms in the comity of nations.

Already, corruption, which cascaded from degenerated nationalist movements, has become a culture. A large chunk of today's Africans grew up to know things the way they are and have always been. Change, in this vein, becomes Herculean but a must attempt. Globalization is already pushing to deepen the ongoing subtle re-colonization of Africa, where it becomes dependent on the developed world for sustenance and development. And so, this generation of Africans must rise up in a break-away move from the past, to script a legacy of true freedom, originality, knowledge-driven productivity, honesty, courage and synergy for the generations ahead.

**THIS TIME** is now the **TIME** for change; and change is only experienced when the large-hearted accept the responsibility, burden and contribution of leadership. Not the leadership that can occupy an office...No! I mean the leadership with the character to offer and lead transformation and renaissance from any where. For centuries, almost from the beginning of time, the world has accepted the ideal that leadership is germane for our collective existence. Sadly, in Africa, we are more fascinated about the office of leadership than its nobility and contribution---this has defined our nuisance-value in no small way.

However, in the time we live in, change beacons! At no point in history has the majority ever provoked change. Change can either be violent or non-violent. But true and lasting change is not a call to violence. Violence is for the weak...it only breeds more violence no matter how successful it appears in its culmination. I have always maintained that the ABILITY to KILL is NOT a proof of STRENGTH. Unknown to many, the weakest missions are usually the ones very quick to engage violence as the only tool for the defence of legitimacy and rights to existence. Violence is actually the weakest expression of self as well as of thought. If you kill a million people...the world can call you a victor but I still know the truth, that you are a WEAK, PITIFUL and acutely IGNORANT idea. Violence for change, we must reject. Yet, True Change in itself is not an automated idea of nature--it has always been the prerogative of a few good non-violent minds. Africa needs a few good minds. Non-violent but intellectually and emotionally wired students, politicians, entrepreneurs and working class professionals who understand the urgency of the moment; who have a good idea of the odds against them and who have a clear desire to win and maximize their potential. This is a call to mental and emotional weaponry.

We must at a time like this rise up to face and surmount the odds. Today, I write not to governments and their officials. Rather, I am the voice of our collective conscience empowering each of us to understand the issues, get off the excuses and accept responsibility as men and women of impact and contribution. This must be the resolve of the men and women of 2011. Men and women with a thorough assessment of the situation on ground and what it takes to win regardless; with a simple formula to accept and pursue:

1) The foundational achievement upon which any nation-building commitment can be built: EDUCATION. The mass education of our people is key and foundational. Each one must take responsibility for their personal education first as well as those of the minds within their areas of influence. 2) The discipline to be the authors of our contents and the owners of the intellectual properties creating the products and services we must consume and export. 3) Those contents must be authored in digital and user-friendly formats especially. 4) Our entrepreneurs must think global by investing in the R&D efforts that will create the global brands that will attract purchasing power from across the globe like Google, Coca Cola or Microsoft. 5) The Policies and Legislation that must be

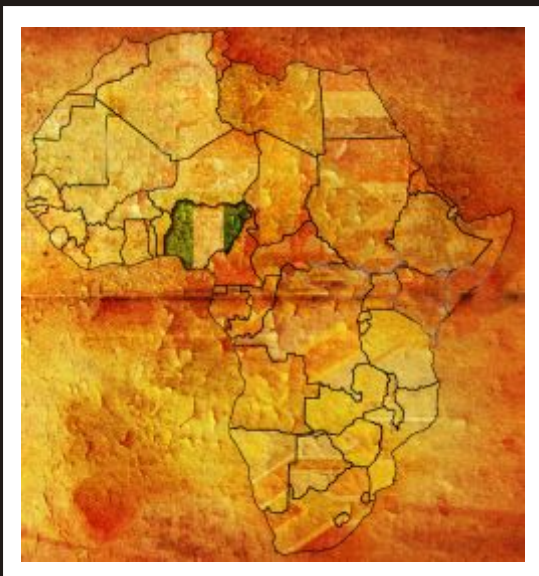


reinvented to create the infrastructure and enabling environment needed to be the main producers of what we consume; as well as the main consumers of what we produce; as well as to protect life and property. 6) We must reduce the powers of English and French Languages as a critical determinant of progress all over the continent.



These will be foundational to all the many extra things we must do. This is a simple commitment to the ideal that against all odds, seasons go, seasons come, and the content of history is determined by the choices of mortals who accept responsibility for the outcomes they prefer. This is the Spirit of Change in this TIME! And this spirit will inevitably sweep across most parts of the Africa, ushering a new school of leaders. Be assured, the process will prove slow but inevitable. A better world will emerge when the smoke clears. And new leadership --- not the old guard --- emerge, positioned to deliver on the promise of change; and the old brigade will fade and be ousted. Fade and ousted, not by bullets and bombs but fundamentally, by the ideal and force of nature that all men die, and new men emerge; that the strength, dexterity and lethality of a prevailing force notwithstanding, all of life exists in a phase; and the best of human control today is only an era holding forth the lines for the emergence of the next era.

So, while we must understand the old history, its contents and motives, preparing the emerging new men and women will be more progressive; so that as death's nature stings life's users through old age, accidents, sickness or natural disasters and occurrences, the new men and women we choose to focus on today will also naturally take over---some still undergrads today, some working middle-level professionals, budding entrepreneurs, young and new voices in politics. This equation has never failed in human existence. It means by nature, disequilibrium, mediocrity, corruption and even foolishness have a life-span; and change, newness, renaissance together with excellence possesses in-built capacity to announce it's visibility in time. For now, we embrace patience as a powerful tool that compels deception or truth to reveal itself. We'll keep working, disseminating critical knowledge, and very soon, the character with the capacity to transform and re-enact the will needed to deal in these times will emerge. At this TIME, Keep moving...and if we are related...we will meet...very soon.





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